



BOARD OF SELECTMEN
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BOARD MEETING MINUTES
January 29, 2018
6:30 p.m.

Selectmen Present: Susan Silverman, Nancy Carney, Daniel Baker

Ms. Silverman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

PRIMARY:

6:30 MEET WITH DAVE DRASBA, SCULLY ARCHITECT

The Selectmen invited Dave Drasba to meet with them to discuss the steeple project and his thoughts on the need for a structural engineer. Ms. Silverman shared what the Selectmen's process was going forward regarding the steeple project. Mr. Drasba shared that when he was here in the fall of 2016, they had done a limited scope of the project which generated a proposal to allow a budget to be prepared. They would have worked with a structural engineer in order to prepare construction documents. Mr. Drasba explained the need to create a document that spells out the project and they were trying to get enough information on the work to be done in order for someone to come up with a budget. Ms. Silverman shared that the Selectmen decided to move away from the McMillian proposal as there was a lot of temporary work and items to come off. Mr. Baker asked if Mr. Drasba had worked with Ted Fellows. Mr. Drasba replied that he has. Mr. Baker stated the Selectmen might have missed a step as they went with a local contractor, who is replacing the columns, but now have been advised to consider hiring a structural engineer that would work for the Town, look at where Mr. Drasba left off and hire a steeplejack to perform the work.

Mr. Drasba didn't know how the steeplejacks could establish a fee. It would be his job to come up with the parts and pieces in order to get pricing. He doesn't know how they can come up with a cost. Mr. Drasba agreed that the Selectmen were looking at an RFP process. Mr. Drasba shared that they would put together the scope of work – listing areas that are unknown - that would be a guiding document and then interview three firms. Mr. Drasba also shared that it was going to be difficult to get a bid. Mr. Baker shared that the Selectmen would look at what was the best value for the Town.

Ms. Silverman shared they are balancing the historical aspect of the building and the practical replacement of some pieces. Mr. Drasba stated it was an important part of the project. Mr. Drasba mentioned if LCHIP funding was approved, the Town would be limited in what material could be used. Mr. Drasba shared that it was a year-long process and there was Grant Workshop that would need to be attended. There was a 20 page document that describes the work and Mr. Drasba noted that up to 50% of the total cost of the project would be awarded. Mr. Drasba has gone through this process before and he could advise the Town. Mr. Drasba noted it was a lot of money that comes with a lot of reporting requirements and for LCHIP this is a five year project that they would be monitoring. The Town would also need to sign a stewardship document and there was an annual inspection report to be completed. Mr. Drasba wanted the Town to be aware of the time involved in getting funding. Discussion was held on the material that was going to be used for the columns and Mr. Drasba shared that fiberglass wouldn't be allowed if the Town received LCHIP funding, and he wasn't sure if it would be held against the Town as far as the Town's commitment to keeping with the historical nature of the building.

Mr. Drasba noted McMillian was part of their proposal because they have worked with them before but are not tied to them. Mr. Drasba explained what they were looking for from McMillian. Mr. Drasba shared that the steeple already had a lean to it and he thought the likely answer was that the steeple would need to come off.

Ms. Silverman asked how to go forward from here and if the Selectmen chose to work with Mr. Drasba what was the process. Mr. Drasba was trying to determine if bringing in three steeplejacks to interview, how he could be effective in that process. Mr. Drasba shared that he would need to think about it before giving a price. Ms. Silverman asked why it was five years of stewardship. Mr. Drasba explained that LCHIP would be looking at the Town being a good steward, looking at whether the Town has an annual repair budget for maintenance, and filling out reports. Mr. Drasba noted that if the Town doesn't follow their process, LCHIP could ask for their funding back.

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Mr. Drasba shared in years two-five there wasn't too much work. Work for the Town was making the application, and LCHIP would want to know the history of the building. Mr. Drasba noted it would be more efficient if the Town had someone that could write that part of the report. The stewardship piece involves 12-14 items that the Town would need to provide information on. Mr. Baker noted that he enjoyed his conversation with Mr. Fellows. Mr. Drasba stated there wasn't a conflict if Mr. Fellows worked on the project. Mr. Drasba also stated the Town needed someone other than just a structural engineer. Mr. Drasba would come back to the Selectmen with a proposal on the most efficient way that he could assist the Town. Mr. Baker asked if his proposal would include Mr. Fellows. Mr. Drasba replied that it would.

Ms. Silverman asked if it took two years to get a contractor in to do the work was there anything dangerous. Mr. Drasba stated if the steeple was in bad shape, he would take the steeple down and put in a temporary roof patch. It could be sitting on the ground for two years or more - scaffolding would be put around the steeple to stabilize. Mr. Drasba asked if a date for the mandatory class had been set. Ms. Favreau shared a date hasn't been set. Mr. Drasba noted that the class would be held sometime in the spring and if the Town made the deadline to submit an application, notification of being accepted and how much funding would be given would be done in December. Mr. Drasba would e-mail Ms. Favreau his proposal.

The Selectmen thanked Mr. Drasba for meeting with them.

7:00 PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING Re: School Issues

The Selectmen held an informational meeting to discuss school issues. Fitzwilliam representatives on the Monadnock Regional School District School Board and Budget Committee were in attendance to present current issues and answer any questions from community members.

Ms. Silverman gave an overview of the funding formula and its impact on Fitzwilliam property owners. Ms. Silverman shared that it was important to get information to voters in Fitzwilliam.

Ms. Silverman stated they don't have all of the answers but wanted to share what they have. Ms. Silverman noted the handouts and the formula chart. Ms. Silverman also noted the cost per student, which was different from Town to Town and she talked about the State's handling of how to fund education. Ms. Silverman discussed the apportionment formula and noted there were many ways to apportion. Ms. Silverman referred to a document in the handouts on how to withdraw from the School District. Ms. Silverman shared that SB 193 was still being worked on and was going through the legislature.

Following are questions asked by community members and the responses *(in italics)*:

How did the formula change come about? *It can be changed every five years and the deliberative session is on Saturday at 10 a.m. There was discussion as to whether or not the Petition Warrant Article could be changed. The deliberative session was explained.*

If the funding formula change wasn't brought up. What are we voting on? *If the formula isn't changed, the formula would stay the same as it is currently.*

Why five years? *Otherwise it would be voted on every year. The voting that takes place at the deliberative session with regard to the budget was explained. It was noted the Warrant has been published.*

It was mentioned that someone on the floor could change the order of the articles to be voted on. How a Petition Warrant Article got included on the Warrant was explained, as well as the default budget. It is regulated by State law and any contract items are automatically carried forward to the default budget.

SB 2 – It is an alternate means of having a deliberative session and then voting at Town Meeting. It allows more people to vote but they aren't part of the discussion during the deliberative session.

Number of students - not paying fair share. How do you not carry your share of taxes? Asked where equity was. *Partly because of the State and Towns can get State Aid. State Aid was applied after apportionment. For the operating budget each Town gets a certain amount of State Aid and Troy gets more State Aid than Fitzwilliam.*

In looking at the numbers of the chart – is it before or after State Aid? *It was after State Aid – what Town is to pay.*

HB 1452 – apportionment expenses in Cooperative School District only on property evaluation. *Years ago it was the number of students that determined what the Towns paid.*

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Has the number of students dropped? *Yes. Formula was 50/50 before it was 75/25. It is hard to follow the bills. SB 193 is a school voucher bill. Parents get compensated if they decide to send their children to private school or homeschool them.*

What is number 252 on the chart? *It is the daily average attendance.*

It was mentioned that the amount given for State Aid was two years old when used to figure out the rate. There are 172 students at George Emerson Elementary and 170 students at Troy Elementary.

Do we take into consideration the number of children at George Emerson? *252 includes all children.*

The tax rate per town – saw if 50/50 it would be more comparable. *If you look at the property assessment, it doesn't equate to the number of students. It is a regressive tax. There are variations in value. State Aid isn't sufficient enough. There is no way to make it "fair". Trying to balance growth in Town, tax could overlay all of that if 100% - makes it difficult.*

Concern is that the focus is more about money and cost. Seems to be less on performance. Concerned with quality of education at George Emerson. Class size higher than at Troy Elementary. Need to have a five year plan. Asked if Fitzwilliam wanted to take the elementary school back and tuition to high school.

It is not a simple path. At the State level – State Aid will decrease every year. The numbers are alarming looking at the tax bill. Does it change the funds to the school district? Changes the bottom line if it goes to 50/50. The operating cost is apportioned by varying formulas. It has been asked if State Aid was pooled and taken off the operating budget. The intent of State Aid is to compensate Towns with lower property values.

Why so few options? *Some districts have other formula options. Not sure if we would find a way to make it "fair".*

Every five years we deal with this. Puts town against town in a cooperative district. Would like to find something more equitable. *All towns in district are pooled. Average number of students and equalized valuation. When equalized, pay more than if by the number of students. Won't know the dollar amount until the State figures out the cost. With equalized valuation there are different assessors in towns.*

We are better off in a country that has educated children.

Community members were encouraged to look at the State Board of Education's website as all of the information was there. Enrollments are dropping but the reason is unknown. Everyone should come to vote on Saturday. You need to be a registered voter.

When will the voting happen? *The process was explained. At the deliberative session can vote if there are any amendments to an article. There was no way of knowing the number of people that would attend.*

Is voting on passage of an article – the wording – have input on every article? *Petition Warrant Article can't be removed.*

It was suggested to voters to get an absentee ballot if they were unable to attend Town Meeting. The Selectmen would summarize what happens at the deliberative session. It was mentioned that the Petition Warrant Article was written by an attorney and goes through DRA.

Mr. Wright thanked community members for attending the meeting tonight.

With regard to the question about withdrawing from the district. It was noted that it would be difficult, have to get votes and be given permission to leave. The Town would need to purchase the school.

It was mentioned that Fitzwilliam would see taxes go up if 50/50 was voted in.

Someone discussed the situation in Unity and asked what the point was?

Was there a limit on the number of amendments? *The Moderator controls the meeting. The Moderator could be challenged. The Moderator sets the ground rules at the beginning of the meeting.*

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Need to focus on the quality of education at George Emerson and not focus on the money aspect. The community was asked to be supportive and be active in the school. It was noted it was the system and not the people. Would be interested in looking at how the community supports George Emerson.

The merging of Troy Elementary and George Emerson Elementary Schools was discussed.

It was noted that Troy and Fitzwilliam work together on calls for: ambulance, EMT, and Fire.

The Selectmen thanked everyone for attending.

*** BUDGET DISCUSSION

- Review Draft Budget

Ms. Favreau shared that she had a draft of the budget. Ms. Favreau also shared that the Budget Committee didn't change any of the Selectmen's recommendations. The Town Clerk's budget was increased and the Conservation Commission budget was reduced. The Selectmen discussed the conversation at the Budget Committee meeting regarding the Town Clerk's budget.

*** APPROVE MINUTES

- January 22, 2018

Mr. Baker made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Carney seconded. Mr. Baker – Yes, Ms. Carney - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

*** APPROVE MANIFESTS

Mr. Baker made a motion to approve the manifests. Ms. Carney seconded. Mr. Baker – Yes, Ms. Carney - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

*** REVIEW SIGNATURE FOLDER – The Selectmen reviewed and signed.

*** REVIEW DRAFT OF TOWN REPORT

The Selectmen reviewed and discussed.

**** STANDARD MILEAGE RATE

Ms. Favreau reported that the IRS had increased the mileage rate to .545, effective January 1, 2018.

Ms. Carney made a motion to go with the IRS mileage rate of .545. Mr. Baker seconded. Mr. Baker – Yes, Ms. Carney - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

*** REVIEW PURCHASE REQUISITION

- Fire Department

Ms. Silverman reviewed the Fire Department's purchase request.

Mr. Baker made a motion to approve the purchase. Ms. Silverman seconded. Mr. Baker – Yes, Ms. Carney – recused herself, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 2-0

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Letter from Helping Hand – The Selectmen reviewed.
- Thank you letter for Officer Moore – The Selectmen reviewed.

Ms. Favreau informed the Selectmen that Chief DiSalvo had notified her that Officer Moore injured his ankle at the academy and he was working through it.

Mr. Baker stated the need to have someone determine whether the steeple needed to come down now. The Selectmen were concerned. Mr. Baker wanted to keep the process moving. The Selectmen were in favor of having an architect and a structural engineer. Mr. Baker would meet with Ms. Favreau to contact Christopher Fournier, with HEB Engineers to see if he was interested in

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meeting with the Selectmen, via conference call, as he is located in North Conway. Ms. Favreau asked if applying for the LCHIP grant could work even begin.

Ms. Carney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. Mr. Baker seconded and the motion passed. 3-0

Submitted by:

Sheryl White
Secretary to the Board of Selectmen

Susan Silverman, Chairman

Nancy Carney, Vice Chairman

Daniel Baker
Board of Selectmen